

MEMORANDUM

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ADOPTED
JULY 14, 1993

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PAUL L. BARRETT, DIRECTOR

FROM: LINDA MONGELLI HAAR, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND ZONING
HOMER RUSSELL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
URBAN DESIGN AND DOWNTOWN PLANNING

SUBJECT: PROPOSED UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE ON FAN PIER/
INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE PUBLIC
HEARING

SUMMARY: THIS MEMORANDUM PRESENTS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE
PROPOSED FEDERAL COURTHOUSE AT FAN PIER AND THE PUBLIC
REVIEW PROCESS THAT HAS SHAPED ITS DESIGN

THE SITE

In selecting Fan Pier for the construction of the new U. S. Federal Courthouse, the Federal judges and the General Services Administration have chosen a site of considerable significance to the people of Boston and the citizens of the Commonwealth. Located where the City meets the sea - at the entrance to Fort Point Channel directly across from Rowes Wharf - Fan Pier not only offers spectacular views of the downtown and of ships passing in the Harbor, it plays a key role in redirecting the expansion of the City's commercial economy across the Channel into the Commonwealth Flats area. Its prominence has always been considered an exceptional public asset, and any structure built there must be able to afford every citizen the opportunity to participate in the remarkable experience of this location, as well as to become a good neighbor to, and an effective model for, future development in the area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The site contains 4.6 acres bounded on the south by Northern Avenue (roughly between Sleeper and Farnsworth Streets), and by the Harbor to the north and east.

Designed by the internationally-known architects responsible for the Government Center Master Plan, the Christian Science Church complex, Harbor Towers, the John F. Kennedy Library and the John Hancock Tower - Pei Cobb Freed and Partners (in association with Jung/Brannen Associates) - the building contains 500,000 square feet of occupiable space and is expected to cost \$162.5 million. The building is 135 feet in height and constructed of masonry, and will include two Court of Appeals courtrooms, 19 District Court courtrooms and six Magistrate Judge courtrooms, as well as expansion potential for four additional courtrooms.

CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT AND SCHEDULE

Approximately 1,500 construction jobs will be created over a 3½-year period, with \$30 million in additional related construction spending infused in the local economy. Site clearance will begin this November, with construction scheduled to start in June 1994 and completion expected in the summer of 1997.

OPEN SPACE

Fifty percent of the site will remain as open space to ensure public enjoyment of Fan Pier, including a 2.3 acre public waterfront park (for which \$5 million has been allocated by the GSA) and 840 linear feet of a Harborwalk promenade along the curved edge of Fan Pier, incorporating a water shuttle ticketing area and boat docks.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE BUILDING

The interior of the Courthouse will be designed to be accessible for public enjoyment of the spectacular views of Boston Harbor and the city skyline and will include exhibit space for local artists. A restaurant on the second floor will be accessible to the public, as will a cafe located in the arcade leading to the Harborwalk. Additional space will be made available for a maritime law museum.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Court will work with the Children's Museum to develop educational programs to teach children and students in Boston's public and private schools about the U.S. judicial system.

THE PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

Although the GSA is exempt from local zoning regulations and review, the Administration has been cooperative in meeting with City of Boston officials, advocacy organizations and community groups. The State Office of Coastal Zone Management does, however, have approval authority over the project because, as a federally-funded program, it regulates all projects within its jurisdiction and requires that they receive a determination consisting with CZM policy. CZM fully recognizes the need for careful planning, especially in relation to those building spaces and outdoor facilities adjacent to the harbor that are devoted to general public use.

The GSA, its architects and BRA staff have met separately on twelve occasions over the past two years to review the design of the Courthouse. On June 1 of this year, the Boston Civic Design Commission, after eight meetings on the project, recommended approval of the revised schematic design of the U. S. Federal Courthouse, including modifications to the building entrance, the cupola, the exterior facades and the open space plans.

Running concurrently with the Authority staff review, the Federal Courthouse Special Task Force (under the joint leadership of the State Secretary of Environmental Affairs and the Chairperson of the City's Fort Point Channel Citizens' Advisory Committee) was convened in February 1993 with two principal goals:

- 1) to achieve consensus on measures that enhance exterior open spaces, interior facilities of public accommodation, water-dependent uses along the shoreline, and public access to and from the site; and
- 2) to develop a strategy by which the necessary funding for such enhancements will be obtained.

The composition of the Task Force was prescribed to include, in addition to State officials, broad representation of the South Boston and Fort Point Channel communities, Harbor and open space activists, neighbors, design professionals, City officials and members of the business community.

Over the past five months, the full Task Force and its three subcommittees have met 60 times separately and collectively (bringing the total number of public meetings on the project to approximately 80) and formulated a number of comprehensive recommendations regarding the design and programming of the public realm in and around the Courthouse. These recommendations describe how water-dependent uses, public open spaces and interior public spaces might be programmed and shaped by the two major themes uniquely appropriate to the site: federal jurisprudence and maritime commerce. The total increase in the budget for these recommendations related directly to the Courthouse is approximately \$9 million. In addition, another \$30 million is being requested from the Federal government for adjacent infrastructure improvements that will have a crucial impact on the Courthouse and its immediate area. This includes \$10 million for the reconstruction of the Old Northern Avenue Bridge as a primary pedestrian connection between the Financial District, Fan Pier and the Fort Point Channel area in general.

As a result of the continued public review process, the GSA may submit a Notice of Project Change to Coastal Zone Management in the next several months. Staff will continue to be involved in this process and provide the Board with updated information as appropriate.

An appropriate vote follows.

VOTED: Following the public hearing regarding the proposed New Federal Courthouse the Authority hereby votes to approve the preliminary design plans for the Courthouse building and the Final Recommendations of the Federal Courthouse Special Task Force; and to direct the staff to continue to work with the Task Force, Coastal Zone Management and the Department of Environmental Protection and to bring forward to the Board and any project changes to be submitted to

CZM in order for the Authority to make its planning board recommendation to CZM regarding consistency with City policy;

and further

VOTED: That as a result of the New Federal Courthouse siting and in consideration of the Fort Point Channel Public Realm planning and rezoning efforts, the Director is authorized to establish a comprehensive long-term Fort Point Infrastructure Development Group which will review and make recommendations to all applicable public agencies concerning the infrastructure needs of the overall Fort Point Channel Study Area; said committee to be made up of a broad base membership of affected parties including members of the Fort Point Channel CAC, the business community, Harbor advocates and residential community, the names of all said members will be submitted to the Authority for its approval.